

receive a score based on their performance. Each score will fall in one of four levels:

- Level 4 (Draft) – Student demonstrates **thorough** understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness.
- Level 3 (Draft) – Student demonstrates **adequate** understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness.
- Level 2 (Draft) – Student demonstrates **partial** understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness.
- Level 1 (Draft) – Student demonstrates **minimal** understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness.

#### Where can I find sample or practice test questions?

The practice tests provide parents and students examples of how students are assessed in ELA and mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessments. Practice tests are available in ELA and mathematics for Grades 3-8.

Practice tests and training tests are available at  
<http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/assessment/Smarter/sampleitems>

Sample test questions are available at  
<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/>

#### What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

The CCSS defines the knowledge and skills students should take away from their K-12 schooling to be successfully prepared for postsecondary and career opportunities. More than 40 states have adopted the CCSS. The CCSS was developed voluntarily and cooperatively by 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia. The CCSS offers schools, teachers, students, and parents clear, understandable, and consistent standards in English language arts and mathematics.



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## Information for Families 2014-15



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## What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium?

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is a group of states working together to develop next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that measure student progress toward college and career readiness. The group involves educators, researchers, policymakers, and community members in order to help all students do well in a knowledge-driven global economy.

Smarter Balanced is guided by the belief that a balanced, high-quality assessment system—including formative, interim, and summative parts—can improve teaching and learning by providing information and tools for teachers and schools to help students succeed.

## What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment?

Students will take the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment in Grades 3-8 during the last 8 weeks of the school year. This new assessment will be used to gauge how well students are mastering the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

Students will take the Smarter Assessment online and it will be computer adaptive. The use of “computer adaptive” technology is more precise than testing with paper and pencil because it adjusts to a student’s ability. The computer bases the difficulty of future test questions on a student’s previous answers. This gives teachers a more accurate measure of student achievement, particularly for high and low-performing students.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment includes:

- **multiple-choice questions:** the student selects the correct answers from answer options,
- **short answer questions:** the student provides a brief description in their response to the question, and
- **performance tasks:** students must take part in a separate group classroom activities for ELA and mathematics. They then must answer a series of short questions on the computer for each content area. In an ELA performance task, students do essay-writing and answer three short questions.

Accommodations and supports for students with disabilities and/or English language learners are built into the system so that the progress of students can be accurately measured.

## What are the test times?

The estimated time for test administration is around 4 hours for Smarter ELA assessments in each grade, and around 3½ hours for the mathematics assessment in grades 3-5 and around 4 hours in grades 6-8. The Smarter tests are **not timed** and these are projected testing times and may vary based on students’ ability levels.

## How are the test results used?

Timely and meaningful assessment information about student performance allows:

- **teachers** to target instruction to individual student needs,

- **students** to better target their own efforts, and
- **administrators** to more fully understand what students know and can do to guide curriculum and professional development decisions.

Teachers, principals, and parents will receive assessment results sooner. Faster results mean that teachers can use the information from optional interim assessments during the school year to differentiate instruction and better meet the unique needs of each student. Results from the machine-scored section of the test will be available earlier than the performance task part of the assessment that involves human scoring.

## Will the Smarter Balanced Assessment result in a common curriculum for all Wisconsin public schools?

No. Decisions about the curriculum are best made by educators in each school district. The Smarter Balanced Assessment will gauge how well students reach the CCSS, but it does not dictate how teachers should teach. Wisconsin educators will have access to resources provided by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, but each district, school, and teacher will decide how to best help students learn.

## When does Smarter testing take place?

The Smarter online test will be given in schools between March 30 - May 22, 2015.

## What type of scores will be provided?

The Smarter Summative Assessment provides information about what students know and can do in relation to the CCSS. Students